

IMPROVING INTERDISCIPLINARY WRITING SKILLS WITH GOOGLE DOCS

Joining the Bologna process has significantly increased the role of interdisciplinary teaching and academic mobility in the Ukrainian universities. For ESP teachers that meant that the focus had been laid on developing new learning environment for satisfying students' academic and professional needs. ESP teachers faced the problem that despite good academic results, most students were not able to perform their research findings at the international scene. They were lacking confidence and sometimes felt helpless because of the absence of proper methodology and tools for connecting their profession and language skills.

The prescribed number of hours given for the ESP course in most universities of Ukraine is two per week, the levels are mixed and the average number of students in the group is fifteen. Moreover, students' motivation is relatively low as they need specific resources for their specialism and English language teachers are not always able to choose proper materials for their ESP lessons. Some more time-consuming tasks i.e. reading manuals for specific purposes, writing tasks etc. are given for homework. This was the reason why it was necessary to create additional self-study materials for teaching writing.

Aims

The following aims were set:

- to create interdisciplinary connections between specialism subject area (Electronic Engineering) and the ESP course;
- to outline the writing genres to be taught;
- to teach students to effectively generate powerful lab and design reports in English based on their background knowledge of the specialism;
- to create the learning environment for real-time collaboration;
- to organize the results in the form of a CLIL interdisciplinary project.

The project required collaborative tool for editing documents in real time. A freeware web-based office suite offered by Google was chosen as it gives the possibility for documents to be shared, opened, and edited by multiple users simultaneously. While using Google Docs, users cannot be notified of changes, but the application can notify users when a comment or discussion is made or replied to, facilitating collaboration.

The procedure of creating learning materials included stages of pre-writing, writing, post writing stages as well as syllabus coordination. Let's consider the procedure.

First, we cooperated with Engineering department lecturers to create the bank of Lab and Design report cases. The materials bank helped to establish syllabus coordination. Students listened to theoretical material in their native language, conducted lab tests and experiments and a week later, they were given the task to submit their Lab or Design reports to the ESP teacher. The calculations and the course content were checked by the Engineering department lecturers during the lab sessions, those students who passed, submitted their reports to the ESP teacher. The criteria for evaluating content knowledge were set by the Engineering faculty, whereas the language ones were set by the ESP teacher.

The ESP teacher used the Form tool to create the template for submitting lab and design reports, Images tool were used to show the graphical data. After students submitted their drafts, the ESP teacher left comments about all necessary corrections. The next steps included collaboration with peers on their research findings. Finally students used Presentation tool to create the course project presentation which consisted of main findings of the reports submitted. The ESP teacher created the Winner form for students to choose the best project and to write comments about the winner's project were students participated in assessing the final course project presentation.

Evaluation of digital writing with Google Docs into was organized in the following way. Students got the structure of the Lab and Design report as well as the report cases. The first two cases students submitted in classical handwritten form, and then they received the checked drafts back. Then, students were asked to send to the shared email their final reports at our. Final course project presentation was conducted in a form of extended written course report that was sent by all students to the shared email account. Students had the possibility to read group mates' reports at home, write in their notebooks comments they would like to share and then voted for the winner during the next lesson.

The next step included offering students to perform next two cases digitally with Google Docs. They submitted and edited drafts online, had online collaboration and assessment. When it was time to pass the last course project presentation, students were given an option either to submit it in the form of the extended Microsoft Word file to the shared email, or to collaborate online with Google Docs.

At the end of the experiment students shared their opinions through online form: what were advantages and disadvantages of working in different environments, what were their emotions, how much time did the tasks take, did they correct themselves, what would they improve etc. That helped the ESP teacher to provide them with meaningful post-task feedback.

From the methodological point of view the teacher counted the number of mistakes made during handwritten and digital drafting, checked whether they followed the genre and structure of the engineering report, avoided plagiarism. As the research is still in process we hope to improve students' productivity and subject matter knowledge in English, increase accuracy by self-correction and boost motivation. Then the classical and digital results will be compared and the conclusions on better approach will be drawn.

The developed approach will be useful for all ESP teachers as it is based on CLIL ideas, is adjustable to the syllabus and students' needs, uses freeware and increases students' motivation.